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Hello and welcome to the 4th issue of the ONLY newsletter devoted to foreign genre fare. Not a lot of BS this go around as I have lots of reviews on hand. I recently saw JUMBO 3 rumored to be directed by Bruno Mattel when Lucio Fulci got sick. It's a typical amalgam of killer moles, mainly those directed by George Kromer, but it's not an in and out disaster. Squidgy effects dominate a plot that was old hat since 1968, however should it ever turn up over here (and I have my doubts whether Italian horror films will ever return to our video stores in large numbers) you could do a lot worse than this.

NOTHING UNDERNEATH (1987) SONY VIDEO
DIRECTED BY CARLO VAREZINA REVIEWED BY JOHN THORSEN



NOTHING UNDERNEATH is a film about a psychotic killer loose amongst beautiful models in Europe. It is hardly an original idea, dating back to Mario Bava's animal classic BLOOD AND BLACK LACE (Mafia) and it's rarely been done well since. Which only goes to make this film such a pleasant and unexpected surprise. NOTHING UNDERNEATH is the best Giallo to reach these shores in years. Better even than the recent Argento efforts (though I have yet to see OPERA). It may mark the arrival of a major new talent in European filmmaking.

From the opening, a stagecoach in apparent wilderness that then crosses a modern highway, there is little doubt that this film wants to be different from its many predecessors. We are quickly introduced to Yellowstone Park forest ranger Bob Crane whose twin sister, we learn is in Europe pursuing a modeling career. The film cuts frequently to sister Jesse and we are given a taste of her rather decadent lifestyle, one that adoring, but straight-laced, brother Bob would abhor.

While out in the park wilderness (lovely location filming) Bob begins to suffer from visions. They completely black out his normal sight and imperil his life when one strikes while he is crossing a flimsy bridge. The visions eventually convey that his sister is in great danger, perhaps about to be murdered by an unseen figure wielding open scissors.

Unable to reach his sister in her hotel Bob jets to Italy where he finds that she has been missing since the day of his vision. He contacts Police Commissioner Gennel (another scumbag Donald Pleasence performance) who is leery of Bob's tale of visions but intrigued by the young man's obvious sincerity. Bob meets several residents of Jesse's hotel (all models) who were friends of his sister's but they seem to know little. Among these is a particularly lovely model named Barbara (Kenne Simonson in her apparent film debut is a real stunner with real presence) and the two seem a bit taken with each other. A rather sweet, hesitant romance blooms between the two as the film progresses.

While Bob uncovers little to solve his sister's disappearance, the mystery grows as several models, all acquaintances of Jesse's, are brutally killed. We see that the killer is the same one glimpsed in Bob's visions, but the identity remains obscured. Gennel is keen very interested and theorizes that Jesse may not be dead but actually be the killer. This theory becomes a virtual certainty when a wealthy

lecher comes forward to tell a story of an evening of wild sex and drugs that he spent with Jesse and several other models, each already a victim. He fears for his own life and confesses that their own evening of debauchery ended in a game of Russian roulette that left one girl dead. The group disposed of the body and he gave them each a fortune in diamonds to buy their silence. One diamond is found at the scene of one of the murders and Danesi is convinced that Jesse is killing the models for the diamonds, knowing they won't go to the police for fear of implication in the roulette death.

Bob is unsure of Danesi's theories and still believes his sister is dead. Then a recently posted letter arrives from Jesse and Bob accepts that she is probably the killer. On his way to leave the city Bob has another vision. This one leads him to risk his life entering a building where he will find his sister and solve the mystery of the murders.

That's it. I refuse to tell anymore of the story. I'll only say that the ending was both surprising and decidedly perverse, yet believable and logical within the story's framework. Something one can't always say for Italian murder mysteries. The film has a very Hitchcockian feel about it (particularly Pino Donaggio's Hermannesque score) but it never stoops to the blatant plagiarism of Brian DePalma. Director Vanzina (the son of film director Stefano Szabo who made the excellent *DAGGER EYES*. ED. NOTE), the film's co-author, may have been influenced by the master, but he is not another clone.

NOTHING UNDERNEATH (the title refers to a character's description of the empty souls that lie beneath the model's beauty and not to a lack of undergarments) is not as stylized or as dementedly brutal as most of Argento's work, but it is crisply directed, well acted and offers enough nudity, violence and perversity to satisfy all but the most jaded of thriller fans and is easily the most suspicious directorial debut since Michele Soavi's *STAKEFIST* (imperial). It is a genuine pity that the film has been given an unceremonious video release. With some care it probably could have had a decent theatrical run. Something no Italian thriller has had in years in this country.



Interview with Victor Israel

Victor Israel has made over 80 films, ranging from starring roles to character parts, for a number of different directors. While one of the nicest guys in the world, his sinister appearance, particularly if his hair is ruffled a little bit, makes him a typical mad scientist type, alcoholic knock off material, or psycho for the horror genre. He has, however, played in a number of different roles ranging from drama to comedy.

Q. Victor, how many films have you made, particularly in the horror realm?

A. I've made so many pictures I don't think I could count them all, ranging from all types of action. I've worked under all the top directors in Spain, including De Cesario, German Wanzo, Juan Ulloa, and many more, plus done films in other areas as well.

Q. Do you have any new films out?

A. Yes, recently I finished a film directed by Ulloa, which is a comedy, not horror, set in southern Spain. As for horror, there is one out now called 'Magic London in which I have the starring role. It involves a series of young girls being murdered in London, but is better than the average serial killer type of film. This film was directed by German Wanzo and also starred Mercedes Pillole, Oscar Morales, and Yonji Ayashi. It is a very different film.

Q. You enjoy the horror film as a genre?

A. Yes, most definitely. I like horror film. It is a very original type of cinema and has a very long history.

Q. You have often been typecasted as a drunk too, it seems, someone who is destined to be killed by a monster or mad killer? Does this stereotype bother you?

A. No, because I have had opportunities to play all roles. My most memorable character in the role you mentioned was as a watchman in Amador De Cesario's film, The Sea Sappent, which also starred Tina Bottoms, Ray Milland, and also the daughter of Tyrone Power, which was unusual for it was a cast which starred Americans. Anyway, I played a drunken workman who got killed by this giant sea serpent which was risen from the water due to a nuclear accident. It was a film a lot like those that came out of Japan earlier, with the giant dinosaurs and monsters.

Q. Do you ever turn down roles or film offers?

A. Yes. One example was when Jacinto Molina came to me and offered me a role as a drunken madman in The Offspring Of The Devil. I told him I would be glad to do that part...if he paid me this certain amount of money. He could not afford the guarantee I wanted so I did not take the part. Instead, he got Chris Huerta from Madrid to play the role. If the money would have been right, I would have probably done it, but he didn't want to pay the price I asked so I did not take the part.

Q. You presently live in Barcelona?

A. No, in Estoril, which is close to that city. I moved to a new home a while ago.

Q. Do you plan to remain active in cinema or is retirement coming?

A. I plan to remain active for a long time to come.

Paul Pierce



 THE SLASHER IS THE SEX MANIAC (1976)
 DIRECTED BY ROBERTO MONTEO REVIEWED BY JEFF SMITH

Here's a gosh-awful Italian detective/revenge/slasher flick of a type that proliferated in the 70's. Farley Granger stars as a typical hard-boiled cop on the trail of a mysterious knife-wielding psycho who only kills UNFAITHFUL married women. This film is a three-scene progression on a loop reel: married women have a liaison with her secret lover (ample nudity throughout), she gets butchered by the mysterious killer, then Farley shows up to investigate; this sequence is repeated endlessly, only briefly interrupted by an undeveloped sub-plot about Granger's estranged wife (luscious Sylva Koscina, best remembered for her role in the two Steve Reeves' HERCULES films), which sets up a so-so "surprise" ending. I am in total agreement with the editor of this site that Italian women are among the most beautiful in the world, and seeing them frequently unclothed is certainly not hard on the eyes, but the pointless brutality of this film and the reinforcement of the ludicrous cinematic notion that enjoyable sex is punishable by death (a staple of the FRIDAY THE 13th clunkers) lends it all a distasteful, misogynistic taint. Monteo's direction is flat and uninspired, the action is negligible, the cinematography dark and ugly. According to Psychotronic, this film was recut with hard-core footage shot in America (featuring, among others, DEEP THROAT's Harry Reems) and re-titled PENETRATION, but that version is unseen by this reviewer. As it stands, THE SLASHER IS A SEX MANIAC is a tepid, somewhat mean-spirited mess, but is ultimately more forgettable than truly excruciating.

 The fourth issue of the British fanzine RATS IN THE CELLAR is out. Gabilan, Seavi, Cannibals are all covered. Write Steve Dunn at 8 Limestone Rd, Burniston, Scarborough, YO13 0DG, United Kingdom.

AMSTERDAMMED (1988) VESTRON VIDEO
DIRECTED BY DICK MAAS REVIEWED BY FREEMAN WILLIAMS

You just don't see many Dutch films. I've come across, really, three of them. One was a very good film of Tijs van Aackermann's excellent police procedurals (I blush to admit I've forgotten the name of the film, but THE LAUGHING POLICEMAN with Walter Matthau was an Americanized version). Of the other two, one leads up to this review.

The second film was Dick Maas' THE LIFT, a diverting little shocker which at least got points in my book for a thoroughly original beastie: an automated elevator with an experimental computer brain gone berserk.

So, I had high hopes for AMSTERDAMMED. What a jerk I am.

I should have known. I read the tape box. I read the little capsule Review in Fngoria. But no, no, hope is a tiny little bird beating away in my ribcage, that maybe this, this with a European viewpoint would be different.

The little bird has since died of malnourishment.

Some seibrain is slithering around the canals of Amsterdam and cutting up people. Predictably, the killer wears a full-face cold water scuba mask reminiscent of a certain piece of sports equipment made popular by an American seibrain. Red herringe come and go, and in the enraging tradition of the very first FRIDAY THE 13TH, we eventually find out that the seibrain IS SOMEBODY WE NEVER EVEN KNEW EXISTED BEFORE and blows his brains out...off-camera of course, this is a classy movie...with a spear-gun.

AMSTERDAMMED is not a total waste...it's good to see a police commissioner stand by his investigating detective when the heat comes down, and there is one cool high-speed motorboat chase through the canals.

But it is an almost total waste. If you must watch a masked killer filk, rent HALLOWEEN again, see this shit done right, then LEAVE IT BEHIND YOU.

Just doing my bit for your cultural enhancement.

LA LOMA (1965) MEXICAN
DIRECTED BY RAFAEL BALEZON REVIEWED BY GORDON HARNER

Ever since I had seen the stills from this film, presented by Forrest J. Ackerman in Famous Monsters, I had a good idea this was one Bex-horror that I had to seek out. Well 24 years later and with the aid of video I caught up to this taco terror. Film starts with great music by Saul Lavietz, nice credit sequence and the obligatory full moon shots. In a country side crypt emerges a she-wolf lusting for blood. Within minutes, three woodcutters are savagely ripped apart. These attacks are surprisingly vicious and the bloodletting is unusual for a '65 film. Interesting camera angles and the makeup is

reminiscent of the 70s **LEGEND OF THE WOLFMAN**.

Dr. Barstein (Joaquin Cordero) arrives at a mansion deep in the Mexican countryside to work with renowned Dr. Fernandez (Jose Elias Moreno-SANTA CLAUDE(1939)). Meanwhile at the sheriff's office, the local coroner, Dr. Gonzales (Cron Alvarado) examines the mutilated corpse, and concludes a savage animal is responsible.

Back at the mansion a young woman (Kitty De Hoyos) is seeking medical treatment. Only her servant (Columba Dominguez, the ex-wrestler, by the way) knows her real malady of lycanthropy. It also appears that Dr. Barstein is a werewolf and during an attempted late night meal consisting of the cute 10 year old granddaughter of Dr. Fernandez, he is mortally wounded by an oriental Van Heising (Nao Murayama)'s german shepherd. Nao carries him a sacred, Latin inscribed dagger and has been pursuing both werewolves for some time.

Dr. Barstein just makes it back to Dr. Fernandez' ultra-equipped lab. After some graphic open-heart surgery scenes (Similar scenes used four years later with J.E. Moreno in **NIGHT OF THE BLOODY APES**). His body is put into a cryogenic chamber.

The sheriff (Roberto Canedo) unjustly jails (Nao) and his dog for the murders. It's while in jail, (Nao) explains his obsession with hunting the lycanthropes.

The last 15 minutes of film is action packed and the fur starts to fly when Dr. Fernandez' wife (Hortensia Santovena) inadvertently releases the wolfman from the cryogenic chamber. She's torn apart, Dr. Fernandez is killed and Dominguez is ripped apart in a thrilling wrestling battle. Nao is killed by La Loba. And at the climax the coroner stabs La Loba to death with the dagger while the wolfman is killed by the dog. They die laying entwined on the barren ground, great south-of-the-border pellicula.

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